CLAIMS

1.   A method comprising:

receiving a user search request;

identifying context information for the user; and

determining search criteria corresponding to the user search request by combining the user search request and the current context information.

2.   A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising performing a search of an information source using the search criteria.

3.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein identifying context information for the user comprises identifying current context information for the user.

4.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the determining comprises generating a product interest characterization having a plurality of fields, wherein one or more of the plurality of fields includes data, received from the user, corresponding to the user search request, and wherein another one or more of the plurality of fields includes data, received from a context awareness model, that represents the context information for the user.

5. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein receiving the user search request comprises receiving, as at least part of the user search request, one or more keywords.

6. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein receiving the user search request comprises receiving, as at least part of the user search request, authorization information that indicates how much data can be provided to different classes of product information providers.

7. A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

communicating the search criteria to one or more search components;

receiving search results from at least one of the one or more search components; and

presenting the search results to the user.

8. A method as recited in claim 7, further comprising:

filtering, after receiving the search results, the search results based on the appropriateness of the search results; and

wherein presenting the search results to the user comprises presenting only appropriate search results to the user.

9. A method as recited in claim 7, further comprising:

determining an appropriate time to present the search results; and

wherein presenting the search results to the user comprises waiting until the appropriate time to present the search results to the user.

10. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the user search request is a request to retrieve information regarding one or more of a product or a service.

11. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the user search request is a request to obtain a product.

12. A method as recited in claim 11, wherein the search criteria is to be submitted to one or more search components via a network, and wherein the product is to be returned to the user via the network.

13. A method as recited in claim 11, wherein the search criteria is to be submitted to one or more search components via a network, and wherein the product is to be returned to the user via shipping external from the network.

14. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the context information comprises information regarding one or more of: the user's physical environment, the user's mental environment, the user's computing environment, and the user's data environment.

15. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the context information comprises information regarding two or more of: the user's physical environment, the user's mental environment, the user's computing environment, and the user's data environment.

16.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the context information comprises physical environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's present location and the current time.

17.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the context information comprises mental environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's likely intentions, the user's preferences, and the user's current attention.

18.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the context information comprises computing environment information pertaining to one or more of: computing capabilities of a client computer being used by the user, available I/O devices of the client, processing capabilities of the client, and available storage space on the client.

19.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the context information comprises data environment information pertaining to data and software resources on a client computer being used by the user.

20.   A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

generating a profile corresponding to the user; and

saving the search criteria associated with the search request as corresponding to the profile.

21.   A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

displaying a form to the user for entry of parameters of the search request;

automatically populating fields of the form with data based on the context information.

22.   A method as recited in claim 21, further comprising not displaying the fields of the form that are automatically populated based on the context information.

23.   One or more computer-readable media storing computer-executable instructions that, when executed, direct a computer to:

receive a request to generate a product interest characterization;

receive one or more pieces of data corresponding to the request;

create a new product interest characterization in response to the request;

populate one or more fields of the product interest characterization with the one or more pieces of data; and

populate one or more additional fields of the product interest characterization with data representing context information for a user associated with the request.

24.   One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein the user associated with the request is the user that initiated the request.

25.   One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein the context information comprises current context information.

26.   One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein receiving one or more pieces of data corresponding to the request comprises receiving, from the user, the one or more pieces of data corresponding to the request.

27.   One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein the context information comprises information regarding one or more of: the user's physical environment, the user's mental environment, the user's computing environment, and the user's data environment.

28.   One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein the context information comprises physical environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's present location and the current time.

29.   One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein the context information comprises mental environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's likely intentions, the user's preferences, and the user's current attention.

30.   One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein the context information comprises computing environment information pertaining to one or more of: computing capabilities of a client computer being used by the user, available I/O devices of the client, processing capabilities of the client, and available storage space on the client.

31. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, wherein the context information comprises data environment information pertaining to data and software resources on a client computer being used by the user.

32. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, further comprising computer-executable instructions that, when executed, direct the computer to:

display a form to the user for entry of parameters of the search request; and

automatically populate fields of the form with data based on the context information.

33. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 32, computer-executable instructions that, when executed, direct the computer to not display the fields of the form that are automatically populated based on the context information.

34. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23, further comprising computer-executable instructions that, when executed, direct the computer to:

communicate the search criteria to one or more search components;

receive search results from at least one of the one or more search components; and

present the search results to the user.

35. A method as recited in claim 34, further comprising computer-executable instructions that, when executed, direct the computer to:

determine an appropriate time to present the search results; and

wait until the appropriate time to present the search results to the user.

36. A method comprising:

sensing a current context of a user;

generating search criteria based at least in part on the current context of the user and one or more search parameters identified by the user; and

retrieving, from one or more information sources, information satisfying the search criteria.

37. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the current context comprises information regarding one or more of: the user's current physical environment, the user's current mental environment, the user's current computing environment, and the user's current data environment.

38. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the current context comprises information regarding two or more of: the user's current physical environment, the user's current mental environment, the user's current computing environment, and the user's current data environment.

39. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the current context comprises physical environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's present location and the current time.

40. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the current context comprises mental environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's likely intentions, the user's preferences, and the user's current attention.

41. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the current context comprises computing environment information pertaining to one or more of: computing capabilities of a client computer being used by the user, available I/O devices of the client, processing capabilities of the client, and available storage space on the client.

42. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the current context comprises data environment information pertaining to data and software resources on a client computer being used by the user.

43. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the information comprises advertisements.

44. A method as recited in claim 36, wherein the information comprises product descriptions.

45. One or more computer-readable media storing computer-executable instructions that, when executed, direct a computer to:

receive a search request, wherein the search request is based at least in part on both user-defined parameters and current context information of the user.

46. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 45, wherein the current context information comprises information regarding one or more of: the user's physical environment, the user's mental environment, the user's computing environment, and the user's data environment.

47. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 45, wherein the current context information comprises physical environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's present location and the current time.

48. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 45, wherein the current context information comprises mental environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's likely intentions, the user's preferences, and the user's current attention.

49. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 45, wherein the current context information comprises computing environment information pertaining to one or more of: computing capabilities of a client computer being used by the user, available I/O devices of the client, processing capabilities of the client, and available storage space on the client.

50. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 45, wherein the current context information comprises data environment information pertaining to data and software resources on a client computer being used by the user.

51. A method comprising:

receiving a search request;

identifying user-input parameters corresponding to the search request;

identifying user context parameters, corresponding to the search request, that represent a context of the user;

comparing both the user-input parameters and the user context parameters to data describing content; and

identifying content, based at least in part on the comparing, that matches both the user-input parameters and the user context parameters.

52. A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the search request comprises a product interest characterization.

53.   A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the context of the user comprises the user's current context at the time of activating the search request.

54.   A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the context of the user comprises the user's current context at the time of generating the search request.

55.   A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the data comprises a plurality of product characterizations.

56.   A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the user context comprises information regarding multiple ones of: the user's physical environment, the user's mental environment, the user's computing environment, and the user's data environment.

57.   A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the user context comprises physical environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's location and a time of the search request.

58.   A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the user context comprises mental environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's likely intentions, the user's preferences, and the user's current attention.

59. A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the user context comprises computing environment information pertaining to one or more of: computing capabilities of a client computer being used by the user, available I/O devices of the client, processing capabilities of the client, and available storage space on the client.

60. A method as recited in claim 51, wherein the current context comprises data environment information pertaining to data and software resources on a client computer being used by the user.

61. A system comprising:

a characterization module configured to characterize a user's context; and

a search criteria generator configured to generate search criteria corresponding to a user search request, wherein the search criteria is coupled to receive a user search request via one or more input devices, and further coupled to receive the user's context from the characterization module.

62. A system as recited in claim 61, wherein the characterization module is configured to characterize the user's content based on input received from a plurality of sensors, wherein the plurality of sensors sense one or more of: the user's physical environment, the user's mental environment, the user's computing environment, and the user's data environment.

63. A system as recited in claim 61, wherein the user's context comprises physical environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's present location and the current time.

64. A system as recited in claim 61, wherein the user's context comprises mental environment information pertaining to one or more of: the user's likely intentions, the user's preferences, and the user's current attention.

65. A system as recited in claim 61, wherein the user's context comprises computing environment information pertaining to one or more of: computing capabilities of a client computer being used by the user, available I/O devices of the client, processing capabilities of the client, and available storage space on the client.

66. A system as recited in claim 61, wherein the user's context comprises data environment information pertaining to data and software resources on a client computer being used by the user.

67. A system comprising:

means for receiving a user search request;

means, coupled to the means for receiving, for identifying context information for the user; and

means for combining the user search request and the current context information to generate search criteria corresponding to the user search request.

68. A system as recited in claim 67, wherein the context information comprises information regarding one or more of: the user's physical environment, the user's mental environment, the user's computing environment, and the user's data environment.

69. A system as recited in claim 67, further comprising:

means for communicating the search criteria to one or more search components;

means for receiving search results from at least one of the one or more search components; and

means for presenting the search results to the user.